

BUTLER

Bishop Lightfoot and the
early Roman See



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

BISHOP LIGHTFOOT

AND THE

EARLY ROMAN SEE.

BY

DOM CUTHBERT BUTLER, O.S.B.

*Reprinted from THE DUBLIN REVIEW,
July and October 1893.*



MAY 6 - 1935

7815

BISHOP LIGHTFOOT AND THE EARLY ROMAN SEE.



1. *The Apostolic Fathers.* Part I.—S. Clement of Rome. A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations. By J. B. LIGHTFOOT, D.D., D.C.L., LL.D., Bishop of Durham. Two volumes. London: Macmillan & Co. 1890.
2. *The Apostolic Fathers.* Part II.—S. Ignatius. S. Polycarp. Three volumes. Second Edition. 1889.
3. *Essays on the Work entitled Supernatural Religion.* Reprinted from *The Contemporary Review.* 1889.
4. *Dissertations on the Apostolic Age.* Reprinted from Editions of St. Paul's Epistles. 1892.

THE reader of the following pages must not look for any general account or criticism of the massive volumes named at the head of this article, which have been styled by Bishop Lightfoot's fellow-worker for many years, and successor at Durham, "a monument of learning, sagacity, and judgment, unsurpassed in the present age."*

The object in view is something much less ambitious. We are all familiar with works in which the historical evidence for the Primacy of St. Peter and the Roman See is marshalled

* Bishop Westcott's Prefatory Note to S. Clement.

with a cogency that appears to us irresistible, and nowhere more forcibly than in the luminous treatise *De Ecclesia* which forms the third volume of Dr. Schanz's *Apology*; and we are apt to wonder how it is that the evidence does not appeal to fair-minded Protestants with the like force. Now Bishop Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers* gives evidence, to use Bishop Westcott's words, of "an exhaustive study of the chief records of the history of the Roman Church to the third century;" his learning, his thoroughness, and his robust common sense are admitted on all hands, his honesty of purpose and fair-mindedness are transparent. It must then be instructive and in many ways useful for us to know precisely the impression made upon a mind of this calibre by the body of evidence which seems to us so satisfactory.

There is another reason why it is well that we should study in Bishop Lightfoot's pages the question of the Early Roman See. For the past half-century and more there has existed in Germany a rationalistic school which has busied itself above all with early Christian documents and history. It need hardly be said that Bishop Lightfoot had little sympathy with the "feverish and restless criticism" of this school; yet he recognises the fact that in various ways the interests of Truth have been served by the attack. "All diligent students of early Christian history," he says, "must have derived the greatest advantage on special points from the conscientious research, and frequently also from the acute analysis, even of writers of the most extreme school;"* and elsewhere: "The destructive criticism of the last half-century is, I think, fast spending its force. In its excessive ambition it has o'erleapt itself. It has not, indeed, been without its use. It has led to a thorough examination and sifting of ancient documents. It has exploded not a few errors and discovered or established not a few truths."†

In this way it has come to pass that some of the old Protestant strongholds have been rendered untenable. The German critics were for the most part hostile, or at least indifferent to Christianity itself, and were unencumbered by doctrinal proclivities and so were able to express an unbiassed

* "Essays on Supernatural Religion," p. 141.

† "Ign. and Polyc.," i. pref. xv.

verdict on various points debated between the Church and the Sects during the past three hundred years. Now Bishop Lightfoot was thoroughly conversant with the methods and writings of this school; we shall therefore be able from his works to gauge how far the controversial position of Anglicans towards the Church in regard to the particular claims of the Roman See has been modified for them by the results of recent research.

The purpose then of these pages is to bring together and codify the views on the Early Roman See to be found scattered throughout Bishop Lightfoot's works, and thus to show precisely to what points of difference the question has in his opinion been narrowed.

There is a certain pathos in this investigation; for the subject is the last one that engaged the veteran scholar's attention, and the last words he ever wrote, only three days before his death, form part of an imperfect sentence in a fragment of an essay on *Saint Peter in Rome*. So far as it goes this fragmentary essay will be of first importance in the inquiry before us; but it has to be supplemented from many parts of his works.

To begin then with those points in which Bishop Lightfoot most nearly agrees with Catholic writers.

I. On turning to the essay on *Saint Peter in Rome* we find that it opens with the recognition of a primacy in St. Peter; and on proceeding further we find that arguments often brought forward against it appear to the author no longer tenable.

Even a cursory glance [he says] at the history of the Apostles, so far as it appears in the Gospel records, reveals a certain primacy of St. Peter among the twelve. He holds the first place in all the lists; he has a precedence of responsibility and of temptation; he sets the example of moral courage and of moral lapse. Above all he receives special pastoral charges.*

Our author bases this proposition on the usual Petrine texts; but Matthew xvi. 18, "Thou art Cephas and upon this rock will I build My Church," is the only one he discusses at any length. He points out that some few Fathers interpret the rock of Christ Himself; but the vast majority understand

* "Clem. Rom.," ii. 481.

it of St. Peter, in some sense. That the rock is St. Peter and not our Lord seems to the author certain. He puts the case thus :

An essential difference lies at the root of the two explanations. We are fain to ask, Is Christ the rock, or is Peter the rock, on which the Church is built (however we may explain the latter alternative)? Now there are two arguments which mainly weigh with those who explain the rock of Christ, (1) the one from the etymology, (2) the other from the imagery.

He goes on to show that neither of these arguments is valid, and that therefore "our only guide is the logical connection of the passage. But here there can be little doubt that the sense points not to Christ the speaker, but to Peter the person addressed, as the rock."*

The question still remains open in what sense St. Peter was the rock. To this we shall have to return when discussing points of difference. But in the midst of all explanations and refinings the fact stands out regarding St. Peter's position—"But still it is a primacy, a pre-eminence."†

II. Bishop Lightfoot next discusses the Roman visit of St. Peter. His judgment on this point is thus summed up :

Reasons exist—to my mind conclusive reasons—for postulating a visit of St. Peter to Rome on which occasion he suffered martyrdom there. If these reasons are not each singly decisive, the combination yields a body of proof, which it is difficult to resist.‡

III. The discoveries and researches of recent years have made it necessary for all who wish to keep abreast of the advance of historical science, to withdraw to a great extent from the old Protestant position regarding the Church of Rome at the close of the first century. The Roman Church of A.D. 95 appears to Bishop Lightfoot as "the most prominent Church of Christendom," and "the most important Church in Christendom."§ And after commenting on the fact that in St. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians his own name does not occur, Dr. Lightfoot says :

This being so, it is the more instructive to observe the urgent and almost imperious tone which the Romans adopt in addressing their

* "Clem. Rom.," ii. 485, 486.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. 491.

† *Ibid.* ii. 487.

§ *Ibid.* i. 58, 61.

Corinthian brethren during the closing years of the first century. . . . It may perhaps seem strange to describe this noble remonstrance as the first step towards papal domination, and yet undoubtedly this is the case.*

And elsewhere :

It is strenuous, even peremptory, in the authoritative tone it assumes.†

St. Ignatius's letter to the Romans was in Bishop Lightfoot's opinion written some fifteen years after that of St. Clement to the Corinthians—*i.e.*, about A.D. 110. In his comment on the Inscription we think we notice a certain wavering ; but the final conclusion seems to be that in it St. Ignatius assigns "a pre-eminence of rank," "a primacy," to the Roman Church. The various passages will be found in the note below.‡ As for the *potentior principalitas* of St. Irenæus, Bishop Lightfoot is quite clear that it points, even more strongly than St. Ignatius' words, to "a certain precedence" of the Church of Rome over the other churches of Christendom.§

* "Clem. Rom.," i. 69, 70.

† "Ign. and Polyc.," i. 398.

‡ St. Ignatius addresses the Roman Church as the one which "*προκάθηται ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ Ῥωμαίων*"—"hath the presidency in the country of the region of the Romans." In the note on this passage Bishop Lightfoot points out that the words allow of a twofold interpretation : they may describe (1) "the limits over which the supremacy or jurisdiction extends," and so would only mean that the Church of Rome was the principal church in the district about Rome ; or (2) "not the range of the supremacy, but the locality of the supreme power itself," and in this case the expression would assign a certain precedence to the Church of Rome over the other churches of Christendom ("Ign. and Polyc.," ii. 190, 191). The author on the whole declares in favour of the first interpretation, and we think the reasons he brings forward perhaps entitle him to do so ; and we notice that Dr. Schanz does not appeal to this text. Zahn, however, is quite clear that "*regionibus omnibus, quæ sub Romanorum erant ditionem, ecclesia Romana quodammodo præsidere dicitur*" ("Patr. Apost. Op. ed. Gebhardt-Harnack-Zahn," Fasc. ii. 57). Harnack is still stronger : "However much we may abate all extravagant expressions in his Letter to the Romans, so much is evident, that Ignatius marked out the Roman community as the President among the sister communities, and that an energetic activity of this community in supporting and instructing the other communities was familiar to him." ("Dogmengeschichte," i. 404.) And it is instructive to find that after all Bishop Lightfoot cannot divest himself of the feeling that this is the sense of the words, for on the next page, commenting on the similar expression—"*προκαθήμενῇ τῇς ἀγάπης*," he refers back, saying, "The Church of Rome, as it is first in rank, is first also in love." Elsewhere he says the passage "assigns to this Church a pre-eminence of rank as well as of love" ("Ign. and Polyc.," i. 398), and in yet another place he says, without any limitation, that in it St. Ignatius "assigns a primacy to Rome" ("Clem. Rom.," i. 71). There can, therefore, be little question as to Bishop Lightfoot's predominant feeling about the meaning of the words, or the interpretation to which he finally gravitated.

§ "Ign. and Polyc.," ii. 191.

It is worthy of note that Bishop Lightfoot attaches no ordinary importance to St. Irenæus as a witness of Christian belief in the second century. He taxes the author of *Supernatural Religion* with regarding the "testimony of Irenæus as the isolated opinion of an individual writer," and of being "unconscious of the historical background which it implies." "He was connected directly with the Apostles and the Apostolic age by two distinct personal links, if not more." "His testimony must be regarded as directly representing three churches at least"—Asia Minor, Rome, and Gaul. Thus "he is backed by a whole phalanx of past and contemporaneous authority."*

About A.D. 190 Victor became Bishop of Rome. In Bishop Lightfoot's eyes he was the first Pope. He writes:

There is all the difference in the world between the attitude of Rome towards other churches at the close of the first century, when the Romans as a community remonstrate on terms of equality [p. cf. "urgent and almost imperious tone," "strenuous even peremptory," "authoritative tone," above] with the Corinthians on their irregularities, strong only in the righteousness of their cause, and feeling, as they had a right to feel, that these counsels of peace were the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and its attitude at the close of the second century, when Victor the bishop excommunicates the churches of Asia Minor for clinging to a usage in regard to the celebration of Easter which had been handed down to them from the Apostles, and thus fomented instead of healing dissensions. Even this second stage has carried the power of Rome only a very small step in advance towards the assumptions of a Hildebrand or an Innocent or a Boniface, or even of a Leo; but it is nevertheless a decided step.†

And more strongly elsewhere: Victor was

the first who advanced those claims to universal dominion which his successors in later ages have always consistently and often successfully maintained. . . . At the end of the first century the Roman Church was swayed by the mild and peaceful counsels of the presbyter-bishop Clement; the close of the second witnessed the autocratic pretensions of the haughty Pope Victor, the prototype of a Hildebrand or an Innocent.‡

* "Essays on Supernatural Religion," 264-268.

† "Clem. Rom.," i. 70.

‡ "Dissertations," 186. Bishop Lightfoot's remarks on Pope Victor naturally suggest to the historical mind thoughts which we shall put in Harnack's words: "How could Victor have ventured on issuing such an edict (powerless though he was to enforce it universally) if it were not established and recognised that to fix the conditions of the common unity in decisive questions of faith belonged chiefly to the Roman Church? How could Victor have made such an unheard-of demand on autonomous communities, if he as Roman

In the course of another half-century (A.D. 250), these "pretensions" had made such way that Rome was now "the most powerful Church in Christendom."* At this time a collision occurred on the question of re-baptism between St. Cyprian and the Pope; we give, without comment, Bishop Lightfoot's presentment of the episode:

Stephen, inheriting the haughty temper and aggressive policy of his earlier predecessor Victor, excommunicated those who differed from the Roman usage in this matter. These arrogant assumptions were directly met by Cyprian. He summoned first one and then another synod of African bishops, who declared in his favour. He had on his side also the Churches of Asia Minor, which had been included in Stephen's edict of excommunication. Thus the bolt hurled by Stephen fell innocuous, and the Churches of Africa and Asia retained their practice.

Here was a combination calculated to reduce the Roman bishops to their proper level—a combination having at its head all the enormous personal influence of St. Cyprian, "the first prelate whose force of character vibrated throughout the whole of Christendom." And what was the sequel? "At a later period indeed Rome carried the victory";† her episcopate continued "the most renowned and powerful in the world."‡

Our investigation so far has revealed the fact that three points regarding the early Roman See appear to Bishop Lightfoot to be clear:—

(1) That a primacy among the Apostles was conferred by our Lord on St. Peter.

(2) That St. Peter visited Rome and was martyred there.

(3) That at the end of the first century the Roman Church held a primacy over all other churches—a primacy which ever grew and developed as the ages ran on.

The importance of the recognition of these propositions by a scholar of the author's calibre—"sobrii iudicii vir ac doctrina exquisita pollens" (Zahn)—can hardly be over-estimated. As compared with the past, they are the high-water mark in this direction of safe Church of England opinion; but the fact must not be overlooked that this point once reached by such a critic

bishop were not recognised as in a special sense the guardian of that common unity?" ("Dogmengeschichte," i. 408.)

* "Dissertations," 206.

† *Ibid.* 205, 207.

‡ "Clem. Rom.," i 98.

is not unlikely to become the low-water mark at no distant date.

We have seen that Bishop Lightfoot does accept a primacy in St. Peter, his personal connection with the Roman Church, and the recognised pre-eminence of that Church at the close of the first century. These are unquestionably approaches which naturally lead up to Catholic teaching. We must now turn our attention to those limitations which form a barrier to progress in that direction. These may be reduced to three heads, each attaching to one of the three points of agreement:—

(1) St. Peter's primacy was temporary, and ceased with the admission of the Gentiles into the Church.

(2) Though in Rome, St. Peter was never Bishop of Rome.

(3) The primacy of the Roman Church was not originally due to any primacy of her bishops, but to other causes; and the later primacy of the Bishop of Rome grew out of the early primacy of his Church.

It must needs be a great advantage to have a clear idea of the reasons which withheld Bishop Lightfoot from accepting the Catholic position when he had gone so far towards it; and also to see what case so learned and accomplished a scholar could make out against that position. Surely the cause will hardly find a better advocate. To preclude all chance of an unfair or inadequate presentment of Bishop Lightfoot's argument, we shall quote his words at some length, for it is proper that such a writer should be allowed to exhibit the whole strength of his case himself.

I. St. Peter's primacy was temporary, and ceased with the admission of the Gentiles into the Church.

In order to clear the way for the establishment of this theory, the text—"Thou art Cephas, &c."—which, as we have seen, conferred a primacy upon St. Peter, has first to be disposed of. Bishop Lightfoot observes that "patristic interpretations of the earliest and last ages are mainly twofold." The first is that the rock is Christ Himself. But this interpretation, as stated above, he rejects in favour of the one that "the rock is connected with St. Peter, being either his confession, or his faith, or some other moral or spiritual qualification, capable of being shared by others." He adds: "The most explicit declaration of it is found in the typical passage of

Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* [xvi. 13], tom. xii. § 10,"—"where nothing could be fuller or more explicit than the language."*

Here it is well to recall the point on which the discussion immediately turns—viz., on what the Church is built; and also, for the sake of clearness, to fix what we all understand by "The Church" here spoken of. It is something concrete and external. It is the body of faithful men that passes under the name of "the Church of Christ."

As the passage of Origen stands in Bishop Lightfoot's pages, there is nothing to suggest that Origen has in mind something different from this. But on turning to Origen himself, it appears that certain omissions, which are indeed indicated, quite alter the meaning of the passage, and, in fact, make it irrelevant to the present discussion.

The extract from Origen is long, but as the matter is of importance from more than one point of view, and the passage has done yeoman's service in controversy, it is necessary to tax the reader's patience so far. The parts omitted in Bishop Lightfoot are printed in italics.

But if we also, like Peter, say, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," flesh and blood not having revealed it to us, but the Spirit from heaven having illumined our heart, we become a Peter, and it would be said to us by the Word, "Thou art Peter" and so forth. For every disciple of Christ is a rock, from whom all they that partake of the spiritual rock which follows did drink; and upon every such rock the whole doctrine of the Church, and the polity in accordance therewith is built;† *for the Church a-building by God is in each one of the perfect, having the assemblage of things that fill up the blessedness of words and deeds and thoughts.* But if thou supposest that the whole Church is built by God on that one Peter alone, what wouldst thou say concerning John the Son of Thunder, or any one of the Apostles? otherwise shall we dare to say that against Peter especially the gates of hell shall not prevail, but that they shall prevail against the remaining Apostles *and the perfect?* *Is not then what has been said before "The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (applicable) to all and each one of them; and also the saying "On this rock I will build my church?"* Are then the keys of the Kingdom

* "Clem. Rom." ii. 482-484.

† *ὁ ἐκκλησιαστικὸς πᾶς λόγος καὶ ἡ κατ' αὐτὸν πολιτεία.* We allow the translation given by Bishop Lightfoot to stand in the text, but we observe that it runs counter to the whole drift of Origen himself, and is certainly incorrect. Huet has much more nearly caught the meaning by his "omnis sermo ecclesiasticus et vitæ juxta ipsum institutæ ratio;"—"Every churchly thought or utterance, and a mode of life in accordance therewith." "Churchly," that is in the sense in which Origen goes on to explain this "church."

of Heaven given by the Lord to Peter alone, and shall none other of the blessed [Bishop Lightfoot's text has here "blessed Apostles;"] "Apostles" is not in the Greek] receive them? But if that saying "*I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*" is common to others also, surely what precedes and what is subjoined as having been said to Peter is (also common). For there the words seem to have been said as if to Peter, "*Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven,*" &c.* But in the gospel of John, the Saviour, when giving the Holy Spirit to the disciples by breathing on them, says, "*Receive the Holy Ghost,*" &c. Many, therefore, shall say to the Saviour, "*Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God,*" but not all who say this will say it to Him having learned it in no way through revelation by flesh and blood, but the Father Himself, who is in heaven, having removed the veil that lay upon their heart; in order that, after this, having gazed with face unveiled upon the glory of the Lord, they may say in the spirit of God, of Him: "*The Lord Jesus;*" and to Him: "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" And if any one saith this to Him, flesh and blood not revealing it, but the Father which is in heaven, he shall obtain the promises [Greek: the things which have been said], as the letter of the gospel says, to that particular Peter, but as the spirit teaches, to every one who becomes like that Peter. For all become namesakes of the rock who are imitators of Christ, the spiritual rock following those who are being saved, that they may drink out of it the spiritual drink. These, like Christ, are called after the rock; furthermore being members of Christ, deriving their name from Him, they were called Christians; and (as members) of the rock, Peters. Starting from this, you will say that the just are called just from the justice of Christ, and the wise from the wisdom of Christ, and similarly you will make surnames for the saints after His other names. And to all such as this, the saying would be said by the Saviour, "*Thou art Peter,*" and so forth, as far as "*shall not prevail against it.*" What is "*it*?" Is it the rock on which Christ builds His church; or the Church itself, for the expression is ambiguous; or the rock and the Church, being one and the same thing?

Here Bishop Lightfoot stops; but it is proper to continue the quotation until Origen has worked out his thought and passed on to something else.

* The danger of making doctrinal deductions from Origen's interpretations when he is in a mystic mood is shown by a comparison of tom. xiii. in Matt. § 31, where he bases an argument for a great difference, πολλὴν διαφορὰν καὶ ὑπεροχὴν, in regard to the power of the keys between St. Peter and τοὺς δευτέρους—which the context shows is everybody else—on the ground that these same words, "*I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,*" apply to St. Peter alone, ἰδίᾳ. The passage in question also throws light on the notion of the Church built by God being in each of the perfect, and every such perfect one being a rock on which the Church is built; for in the same line of speculation he makes a limited power of the keys a possession of every Christian who thrice admonishes his brother but in vain, the fulness of power belonging to St. Peter alone.

This I think, hits off the truth; for the gates of hell shall neither prevail against the rock on which Christ builds the Church, nor against the Church; as is written in Proverbs, "the path of a snake over a rock cannot be found." But if the gates of hell shall prevail against any one such an one would be neither a rock on which Christ builds the Church, nor (would he be) the Church a-building by Christ on the rock. For the rock is impassable for a snake, and it is stronger than the gates of hell striving against it; so that on account of its strength the gates of hell do not prevail against it; and the Church, as the building of Christ, who built His house wisely on the rock, does not admit of the gates of hell, which prevail against every man who is outside the rock and the Church, but have no power against it. Having observed that every one of the sins through which it is possible to go down to hell, is a gate of hell, we shall understand that the soul having spot or wrinkle or any thing of the sort, and which on account of its wickedness is neither holy nor blameless, is neither a rock on which Christ builds, nor a church, nor part of a church, which Christ builds on the rock.*

As it stands in Bishop Lightfoot's pages, the passage is, we admit, effective for his purpose; but on reading it in its entirety we soon perceive that the Church which Origen has in mind is not the congregation of the faithful, the Kingdom of God on earth, but that other Kingdom of God spoken of by our Lord when he said, "The Kingdom of God is within you." It is the reign of grace in the individual soul. With this clue the passage, however obscure it may seem at first sight, is clear enough; and although in the course of it Origen almost loses himself in the maze of his own metaphors, yet even through this he works round again to the idea from which he started.

The fact is, that the passage on which such stress has been laid, is wholly irrelevant in the controversy in which it is employed, and its use is a simple *ignoratio elenchi*.

Moreover, so far from being a "typical passage" from any point of view, we may well ask, can its fellow be found in the whole range of patristic literature; nay, so far as doctrinal considerations are involved, it is not typical even of Origen himself.†

* Origen, "Comm. in Matt.," tom. xii. §§ 10, 11, 12.

† We hasten to add that we are satisfied Bishop Lightfoot had nothing to do with its preparation in the form in which it appears in his pages. This part of his work was written just before his death, and he was unable to revise it; it is quite clear that in his draft he must have taken the passage directly from some controversial book ready at hand. In accordance with his usual mode of work, on revision he would have verified the passage, and doubtless would have seen how carefully Origen's real thought had been eliminated

We have dwelt on this stage of our inquiry, because the turn of Bishop Lightfoot's argument lies in this quotation; and the others, notably the one from St. Cyprian, are of no serious force, this one put aside.

Now to dismiss shortly the question of patristic interpretations of the Rock. Bishop Lightfoot goes on to say that with the exception of those few who understand it of Christ the Rock, St. Peter's confession, or faith, or firmness "is with some modification the universal interpretation of the Fathers for many centuries." * And unquestionably this interpretation is a common one from St. Hilary onwards. But we think a third interpretation should have been mentioned, which can hardly be regarded as a mere "modification," viz., that St. Peter himself is the rock. This is the earlier interpretation, being found currently in Origen, Tertullian and Cyprian; and it always continued the more common one. Often both are given by the same Father; and indeed a moment's thought is enough to show that they are not mutually exclusive.

So much for the patristic side of this discussion; and we must add that Bishop Lightfoot's treatment of the Fathers seems to us little calculated to put the facts of the case in the clear light of day. He must now be allowed to develop without interruption the substantial part of his thesis as to the temporary nature of St. Peter's primacy; any comments will therefore be thrown into footnotes.

The promise [he says] must therefore, as I understand it, describe some *historical manifestation* which sprang from St. Peter himself, "not from a confession or a faith or a constancy such as thine, but from *thy* confession, *thy* faith, *thy* constancy." As a matter of exegesis, it seems to be more strictly explained *not* of Peter himself; for then we should expect ἐπὶ σοῦ rather than ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ; but on this constancy, this firmness of thine, to which thy name bears witness, and which has just evinced itself in thy confession." †

from the version used. For there can be little doubt that the person who originally prepared that version fully understood the real drift of the passage. A mere polemical haste to rush at a conclusion can hardly have been so happy in omission, version, and insertion at haphazard.

* "Clem. Rom.," ii. 484.

† If this be the meaning of our Lord's words should we not with equal reason expect in the first half of the text: "I say unto thee that this constancy, this firmness of thine is a rock?" And as a matter of mere exegesis, seeing that our Lord's words were "Thou art rock (Cepha), and upon this rock (Cepha)," their application to Peter himself is surely more literal and natural than to the remote and unexpressed idea "this firmness of thine," &c.

Though it denotes a certain primacy given to St. Peter, yet the promise is the same in kind—so far Origen is right—as pertains to all the faithful disciples, more especially to all the apostles.* It is said of Peter here; but it might be said, and is said elsewhere, of the other apostles. They too are the *θεμέλιοι* (Ephes. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14); they too have the power of the keys (John xx. 22 *seq.*).†

But still it is a primacy, a pre-eminence. . . . In what does this primacy consist? Obviously Peter cannot be the rock, in any sense which trenches on the prerogative of Christ himself. His primacy cannot be the primacy of *absolute sovereignty*; it must be the primacy of *historical inauguration*.‡ When we turn to the Apostolic records we find that this work of initiation is assigned to him in a remarkable way in each successive stage in the progress of the Church. The same faith, the same courage, which prompted the confession and called forth the promise of Christ, follows him all along, leading him to new ventures of faith.

But lest we should misinterpret the position thus assigned to him and attribute to it a continuity and permanence which does not belong to it, he vanishes suddenly out of sight; another more striking personality assumes the chief place, and achieves conquests which he could not have achieved; his name is hardly ever mentioned. He has fulfilled his special mission, and his primacy is at an end.§

The exercise of the primacy is followed out step by step through the first twelve chapters of the Acts. "Peter asserts his primacy in the foundation of the Christian Church"; "he takes the initiative at all the great crises of its development"; finally,

The great conquest of all still awaited him. The Church must become

* In the passage of Origen referred to, no preference in regard to the promise is given to the Apostles above any other of the faithful.

† *Θεμέλιος*, a foundation stone, is quite a different thing from the rock on which a building, foundations and all, stands. We are not here seeking to fix a particular meaning on the text, but only looking into the validity of what our author brings forward. We must therefore point out that in the divine economy St. Peter may be very well both the rock and a foundation stone. Both expressions are figurative, and there is no antagonism in the two independent figures. Nor is there any need to bring them into literal or so to speak physical harmony; who would find any difficulty in our Lord being at once the Good Shepherd and the Door of the Fold? Figures must be interpreted individually.

As regards "the power of the keys," this is a technical theological, not a scriptural, term. In Scripture the power of binding and loosing is more than once mentioned as conferred generally; "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," whatever the figure may signify, are explicitly entrusted to St. Peter alone, in words which are "directed with all the force which repetition can give them to the person addressed"—St. Peter ("Clem. Rom.," ii. 487).

‡ Why "must"? Is there nothing between absolute sovereignty and his historical inauguration?

§ "Clem. Rom.," ii. 487.

a world-wide Church. . . . By virtue of his primacy Peter is chosen as the recipient of this revelation of revelations. . . . Cornelius the heathen is baptised; and at one stroke all the privileges of the Christian Church are laid before the whole heathen world.

Thus the Lord's promise is fulfilled: the primacy is completed; the foundations are laid on the rock, whether of Peter's confession or of Peter's courage or of Peter's steadfastness. From this time forward the work passes into other hands. The wise master-builder piles up the later storeys of the edifice, for which his manifold gifts and opportunities had fitted him—his Hebraic elementary training, his Greek academic culture, his Roman political privileges. Paul completes what Peter had begun. The silence of the later apostolic history is not less significant than the eloquence of the earlier as to the meaning of Peter's primacy. In the first part he is everything; in the subsequent record he is nowhere at all.* He is only once again mentioned in the Acts (xv. 7), and even here he does not bear the chief part. Where the Church at large, as an expansive missionary Church, is concerned, Paul, not Peter, is the prominent personage; where the Church of Jerusalem appears as the visible centre of unity, James, not Peter, is the chief agent (Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18; Gal. ii. 9, 12). Peter retains the first place, as missionary evangelist to the Hebrew Christians, but nothing more. Moreover, when St. Paul appears on the scene, he is careful to declare emphatically his independence and equality with the other apostles. "I reckon," he says, in one place, "that I fall short in no whit of the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. xi. 5); then again while devoting two whole chapters to recording the achievements of his apostleship, he repeats almost the same words, "I am become a fool; ye have compelled me; for I fall short in no whit of the very chiefest apostles, even though I am nothing" (2 Cor. xii. 11). Accordingly he claims all the privileges of an apostle (1 Cor. ix. 5).†

* The idea that primacy and activity, official position and personal influence are correlative—that the primate must bear the chief part and be the most prominent personage and the chief agent—lies at the basis of much of Bishop Lightfoot's argumentation. The proposition needs only to be stated in its native crudeness to make it clear that it is a confusion of thought.

† "The very chiefest Apostles" is the translation of the Authorised Version for *οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι*; but the margin of the Revised Version gives "those pre-eminent Apostles;" and Liddell and Scott say "those who are ever so undeniably apostles," or, in the latest edition, "those who are beyond all doubt apostles." And to any one who will read 2 Cor. x., xi., xii., either of Liddell and Scott's versions will appear the appropriate one. Some teachers were undermining St. Paul's authority with the Corinthians, saying he was only a second-rate apostle, or even not a true apostle. Against these disparagers of his mission St. Paul asserts the fulness of his apostolic powers and his equality therein with the foremost members of the Apostolic College.

As regards "independence," there is nothing about it.

The other text referred to (1 Cor. ix. 5) is (to use the Revised Version): "Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

What bearing can all, or any, of the foregoing have on St. Peter's primacy?

Moreover especially, he asserts his absolute equality with Peter (Gal. ii. 7 *seq.*);* and he gives practical proof of his independence by openly rebuking Peter, when Peter's timidity endangered the freedom and universality of the Church. If there was any primacy at this time, it was the primacy not of Peter, but of Paul.†

The first impression made upon our minds by the foregoing extract is that the arguments advanced in it are one and all quite familiar to us: they have been in common use for the past three centuries. Whence we gather that Bishop Lightfoot had really nothing to add to the case his predecessors had made out.‡ This is beyond doubt a fact of no small importance. But, on second thoughts, we realise that these arguments are here made to do a different duty from that assigned them in their traditional use among Protestant controversialists. These latter denied that the Petrine texts had conferred any primacy on St. Peter, and in these circumstances the argument of equality drawn from the passages in St. Paul's Epistles may have had some weight. But unbelieving critics in Germany—men with no higher interests at stake than those of pure scholarship and accurate exegesis—have forced scholars of Bishop Lightfoot's quality off the old Protestant ground. Now, therefore, that it is recognised our Lord did give St. Peter

* Let St. Paul speak for himself:—"They who were of repute [evidently James, Cephas and John] imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who are reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. ii. 6-9).

† "Clem. Rom.," ii. 489, 490. The allusion in the closing lines of the text is of course to the celebrated occasion at Antioch, when St. Paul resisted St. Peter "to the face because he stood condemned" (Gal. ii. 11), and rebuked him for "dissimulation" and not "walking uprightly." In his edition of the Galatians, Bishop Lightfoot thus paraphrases St. Paul's words: "At Antioch I was more than an equal. I openly rebuked the leading Apostle of the circumcision." When an inferior remonstrates with or openly rebukes a superior, does he thereby become more than an equal, does he even assert equality? When a subject has rebuked a king, or a bishop has rebuked a pope, have they really changed places and relations?

‡ An unguarded expression in "Clem. Rom.," i. p. 96, might easily be understood as meaning that an argument for the equality of the two Apostles is furnished by St. Clement, who "co-ordinates the authority of St. Peter and St. Paul as leaders of the Church"; but a reference to the preceding page and to page 9 of the same volume, shows that this is urged only against the extreme tenets of the Ebionites of the second century and the Tübingen school of our own.

a primacy, these same arguments are put in in evidence of the temporary character of that primacy. There has been a complete shifting of the ground, whereby what used to be arguments have become at most mere objections, and in their new function they are shorn of whatever force or plausibility they may formerly have had.

Reviewing as a whole the argument whereby Bishop Lightfoot seeks to neutralise the recognition of the primacy given by our Lord to St. Peter, we find it to fall under three heads.

Firstly, an attempt to weaken the force of the Petrine texts. After proving that by the words of Holy Writ it appears that our Lord really did confer upon St. Peter a primacy, a pre-eminence, among the Apostles, he goes on to argue, by the help of Origen, that, after all, what was given to St. Peter was nothing more than what was given to the other Apostles. How far Origen has availed in this cause we have seen.

Secondly, the silence about St. Peter in the second half of the Acts, which indicates that the primacy was only temporary.

Thirdly, a number of expressions and incidents in the Epistles of St. Paul, showing that the primacy had, as a matter of fact, ceased. This branch of the argument has been sufficiently dealt with in the foregoing footnotes and in what has been said just above.

The first and third members being removed, it is found that the backbone of the argument lies in the second—viz., the silence of the second half of the Acts. Here is an argument from silence, of a truth. And great indeed must be the power of that silence if it is to effect the purpose here assigned to it. For it has to limit and negative one of the most striking pronouncements that ever fell from our Lord's lips. The argument from silence, more than any other, requires to be handled with care and applied with caution. In other cases of silence Bishop Lightfoot is fully alive to the danger of assuming that the "silence means exactly what we wish it to mean." Indeed, "the argument from silence has been so often abused, that one is almost afraid to employ it at all." Yet throughout this dissertation on St. Peter "the argument from silence is courageously and extensively applied." Nay, Bishop Lightfoot is as "eloquent on the silence of" St. Luke as is the author of *Supernatural Religion* on the silence of Eusebius. Yet, as in

the case of Eusebius, so in St. Luke's, surely "the first care of the critic should be to inquire with what aims and under what limitations he executed this portion of his work."* Any such inquiry would carry us far beyond our limits; nor is there any need for it, as more than one reason, natural or providential, at once suggests itself for the story of the Acts leaving Peter and following Paul; thus, after all, the particular argument which is to effect so much is at best but an interpretative inference, and by no means a necessary one.

But let us for a moment leave the region of formal discussion of points of exegesis and criticism and logic, and see how the matter looks when viewed from a higher level.

Bishop Lightfoot practically regards the silence of the second half of the Acts as nothing less than a providential dispensation "lest we should misinterpret" our Lord's words and attribute to what they conferred upon St. Peter "a continuity and permanence which does not belong to it."† Now it is an historical fact, as all must acknowledge, that these words have more profoundly than any others in the Gospel story affected the Church as the organised Kingdom of Christ. Not merely then must one who thinks as Bishop Lightfoot, consider that they have been misinterpreted, but furthermore that by them the Church has in all ages been enthralled. Bishop Lightfoot was a believer, and those who believe that Jesus Christ is God cannot forget that all He said was said with full meaning and foreknowledge. He must have known full well that these words of His would prove a fruitful source of error to His Church, a snare to innumerable souls. And the only warning He has to give, the only remedy He has to apply is—the silence of the second half of the Acts!

Here there is a parting of the ways. To many, among whom must be Bishop Lightfoot himself, the history of the Church is from the beginning a story of grave and ever accelerated declension; it is, as in the case of Stephen and Cyprian, the wrong ever overcoming the right, and more than anything else in virtue of a false interpretation of these words of our Saviour. How dreary, how lifeless, how enigmatic a study must such Church history be.

* "Essays on Supernatural Religion," 33, 84.

† "Clem. Rom.," ii. 487.

To us, on the other hand, the story of God's Church is full indeed of contradiction, for she has to face the world, and full of failing, for she is made up of sons of Adam; but fuller still by far of joy and peace in believing that it is the manifestation, slow and patient, but ever unfolding, of God's providential government of His faithful people. And these words of our blessed Lord, spoken to the poor Fisherman, are as that grain of mustard seed, which, indeed, is less than all seeds, but which once sown has ever been growing up and putting out great branches, till in due time it became a tree, so that the nations of the earth have come and lodged under the shadow thereof.

St. Peter's primacy has detained us long, but the discussion, though worn almost threadbare, has not lost its import. It is, too, an instructive study to see this really good and able man struggling thus to free himself from the toils of the great Petrine texts.

Bishop Lightfoot's reading of the historical facts arising out of St. Peter's connection with the Roman Church will be considered in a second article.

POSTSCRIPT.—The foregoing article was already in type when the recently published "*Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*," by the Rev. W. F. Puller, came to my hands. The author, so far as the ground covered by the present article is concerned, has little to add to Bishop Lightfoot's presentment of the case. In regard to the history of the Roman See in primitive times, *i.e.*, in the first two and a-half centuries, he is evidently unacquainted with the progress and results, and apparently even the nature, of recent investigations, and stands in these matters very much on the footing of the old-fashioned controversial books now out of date. Thus the *Convenire* of St. Irenæus is still for him "to resort" (*cf. e.g.*, Harnack, "*Dogmengeschichte*," i. 406); the "*potentior principalitas*" applies to the city, not the Church (*cf.* Lightfoot, "*Ign. and Polyc.*," ii. 191). Mr. Puller (App. Note B) discusses at length passages from St. Cyprian, which, he contends, have been "twisted" by Ultramontane writers from their true sense. From the same passages Harnack concludes that without doubt St. Cyprian in his controversy with St. Stephen put himself into contradiction with his previously expressed views on the position of the Roman See in regard to the Church. Is Harnack, too, among the Ultramontanes?

So far as concerns its bearings on the highly interesting and important question of the origins and progress of the pre-eminence of the Roman Church and See, Mr. Puller's book cannot be regarded in any other light than as a contribution to current and ordinary controversy, which will have, sooner or later, to be modified as the results of the labours of dispassionate historical critics become more common property than is at present the case in this country.



IN our former article it was shown that Bishop Lightfoot recognised these facts concerning St. Peter and the Early Roman Church :

I. Our Lord gave St. Peter a primacy among the Apostles, and the action of this primacy may be seen in the early stages of the history of the Apostolic Church.

II. St. Peter visited Rome and was martyred there.

III. At the close of the first century the Roman Church had a "precedence" or "primacy" among the Churches of Christendom, which becomes more and more distinctly marked during the course of the next two centuries.

It was seen, moreover, that Bishop Lightfoot puts forward three other propositions, each correlated to one of these three statements of fact, and having the practical effect, if established, of neutralising their doctrinal significance.

The first of these correctives was dealt with at some length. The arguments relied on to establish the theory that St. Peter's primacy was transient—a mere "primacy of historical inauguration," which lapsed of itself on the reception of the Gentiles into the Church—were tested in order, and it was found after the examination that one survived, an argument from the silence of the second part of the Acts about St. Peter. It was then shown how inadequate and even fallacious this argument is. Thus the first of Bishop Lightfoot's correctives fails, there being no evidence of any withdrawal of the prerogative conferred upon St. Peter by Christ. We have now to consider the questions raised as to the nature and consequences of St. Peter's historical connection with the Roman Church.

The second of Bishop Lightfoot's positions may be thus formulated :

II. Though in Rome, St. Peter never was Bishop of Rome. This is what Bishop Lightfoot brings forward in support of his view :

Was S. Peter Bishop of Rome at all? He might have been founder or joint founder of the Church there, without having been regarded as its bishop. No one reckons S. Paul as first bishop of Thessalonica or Philippi, of Corinth or of Athens, though these Churches owe their first evangelisation to him.

Now I cannot find that any writers for the first two centuries and more speak of S. Peter as bishop of Rome. Indeed their language is inconsistent with the assignment of this position to him. When Dionysius of Corinth speaks of the Apostles S. Peter and S. Paul as jointly planting the two Churches of Corinth and of Rome, he obviously cannot mean this; for otherwise he would point to a divided episcopate. The language of Irenæus (iii. 3. 3) again is still more explicit. He describes the Church of Rome as founded by the Apostles S. Peter and S. Paul, who appointed Linus bishop. After him came Linus [*sic*]; after Linus, Anencletus; after Anencletus "in the *third* place from the Apostles Clement is elected to the bishopric," and the others, when any numbers are given, are numbered accordingly, so that Xystus is "the sixth from the Apostles," and Eleutherus, the contemporary of Irenæus, "holds the office of the episcopate in the twelfth place from the Apostles." This is likewise the enumeration in the anonymous author of the treatise against Artemon (Euseb. H. E. v. 28), probably Hippolytus, who numbers Victor "the thirteenth from Peter."*

These were the last words Bishop Lightfoot ever wrote. But in another place he has developed more fully the argument founded on the words of St. Irenæus. He there says Irenæus "separates the apostolic founders of the Roman Church from the bishops, and begins the numbering of the latter with Linus"; and that Eusebius "in the numbering of the several bishops always omits the Apostolic founder or founders from the reckoning."†

Here it is laid down that the language of the writers of the first two centuries and more is "inconsistent" with the assignment to St. Peter of the position of Bishop of Rome. We must therefore in the first place see what are the precise terms of the passages on which this statement is based :

Irenæus: "After Anencletus in the third place from the Apostles Clement is appointed to the episcopate"; "Xystus is appointed sixth

* "Clem. Rom.," ii. 501, 502.

† *Ibid.*, i. 204, 207.

from the Apostles"; "Now in the twelfth place from the Apostles Eleutherus holds the office of the episcopate."

Hippolytus (?): Victor was "thirteenth bishop in Rome from Peter."

Eusebius: "First after Peter, Linus obtained the episcopate of the Church of the Romans"; "Clement held the third place of those who were bishops in Rome after Paul and Peter"; "Telesphorus received the bishopric seventh from the Apostles."*

To test whether such language really is inconsistent with the episcopate of the Apostles let us take analogous modes of expression. "First after the Conqueror, William Rufus obtained the Crown of England; after Henry I., in the third place from the Conqueror, Stephen is appointed to the throne; Henry V. was the thirteenth King of England from the Conqueror." In an indifferent case like this all will be ready to admit that such language is not "inconsistent" with the belief that William the Conqueror was King of England, and that it cannot be held to "separate" him from the line of kings. Turning now to the case in hand, a single fact will probably to most minds be enough to show that Bishop Lightfoot's interpretation is not one imposed by the texts in question; for a critic like Lipsius, though believing Eusebius to be mistaken as to the fact, thinks that by his words about Linus, just quoted, the Roman episcopate of St. Peter is "expressly asserted."† It will be seen that the passages quoted from Irenæus, Hippolytus (?), and Eusebius are perfectly parallel, and it is impossible to make a real distinction in thought between them. If such contrary interpretations can be given by qualified critics, and if in a parallel case, such as that instanced above, no inconsistency is found, it would appear that Bishop Lightfoot has been somewhat precipitate in inferring from such language in itself exclusion or separation.

But we must go a step further forward and point out that Irenæus is urging against heretics, as a palmary argument, the authority of apostolic teaching and tradition as handed down in churches founded by Apostles, and showing how that apostolic authority in these churches is to be arrived at. He does not say in general terms, "Hear the Church of Rome, because it was founded by the Apostles Peter and Paul"; but

* "Clem. Rom.," i. 156, 204, 206, 207, 271.

† "Dictionary of Christian Biography," i. 26.

he expressly narrows the source of authority by placing the evidence and guarantee of the tradition in the succession of bishops, as the channel whereby it flowed from its apostolic fountain-head. Now the force of his argument depends precisely on the fact that there is no break, above all at the critical point of contact with the Apostles. And so it is impossible to suppose that Irenæus had in mind any idea of separating the apostolic founders of the Roman Church from the line of bishops.

But to pass from the mere criticism of forms of expression and of run of thought to the substance of the matter. The language of Irenæus and Eusebius in speaking of the bishops of Rome (and Eusebius does the same in the case of other Apostolic Sees, *e.g.*, Antioch and Alexandria), as being the third or the twelfth "from the Apostles," can be satisfactorily accounted for on two hypotheses, and on two only: either the apostles were bishops, and something more than mere bishops; or else they were not bishops at all. The latter would be Bishop Lightfoot's explanation, for to him—

The episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyteral by elevation. . . . The functions of the Apostle and the bishop differed widely. The Apostle . . . held no *local* office. He was essentially, as his name denotes, a missionary, moving about from place to place, founding and confirming new brotherhoods. . . . It is not, therefore, to the apostle that we must look for the prototype of the bishop. How far indeed and in what sense the bishop may be called a successor of the Apostles will be a proper subject for consideration: but the succession at least does not consist in an identity of office.*

The promise here held out was not fulfilled; but as to Bishop Lightfoot's opinion there can be no doubt; it is summed up in the marginal note: "Bishops: the office not a continuation of the apostolate"; and still more categorically in the index: "Apostles not bishops."

It would be impossible to enter here on any discussion of the Christian ministry in apostolic times—a question on which a recent Catholic writer well says: "To some the ecclesiastical organisation in this early age seems full-blown episcopalianism;

* "Dissertations," 154, 155. The author's view underwent no modification to the end (*Ibid.*, 242, 243).

to others stark presbyterianism; while others see in it democracy pure and simple. Of course, unless there were a large field over which speculation might freely roam, such strange diversity would be impossible.* But it may be observed that Bishop Lightfoot seems never to have faced the other alternative—viz., whether the apostles were bishops and something more, and whether the difference between the two was one of degree and circumstances rather than kind. It must be remembered that he holds that neither apostles, bishops, nor presbyters were priests, and that the sacerdotal conception of the Christian ministry is a later perversion.† In his eyes all Christian ministers have, from the beginning, been merely officers; and, of course, from this point of view, there can be no question as to “character,” but only as to “functions,” and a difference of function would constitute a difference of office.‡ Of course, if none of the apostles were bishops, it logically follows that St. Peter was not Bishop of Rome. But persons who quote Bishop Lightfoot’s authority for the statement that St. Peter was not Bishop of Rome, must bear in mind his premisses. This, however, is hardly an historical settlement of the question.

Let it therefore be considered what would be the natural position of an apostle residing in a church, either permanently or for a notable period of time. Clement of Alexandria gives a description of St. John’s life at Ephesus, which Bishop Lightfoot accepts as authentic, and thus sums up: “Here he gathered disciples about him, ordained bishops and presbyters, founded new churches, making Ephesus his headquarters, but visiting the neighbouring districts as occasion required.”§ St. Clement of Rome also tells us that the apostles, “preaching everywhere in country and town, appointed their first-fruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and

* Schanz, “Apology,” iii. 145 (trans.).

† “Dissertations,” 210–238.

‡ It is curious that Bishop Lightfoot did not see that if there be any representative of the Apostle in the existing Church, even from the mere point of view of functions, it is the Catholic bishop, within the limits of his diocese. Of course in the Anglican Church this is much obscured on the one hand by the survival of late mediæval ecclesiastical conditions as to benefices, and on the other by the narrowed and weakened conception of the bishop’s position in the Church and his office.

§ “Ign. and Polyc.,” i. 440.

deacons unto them that should believe.”* That an apostle, wherever he was, would ordain to the ministry can hardly need formal proof. By the very nature of things the apostle would be the teacher and guide of the community in which he lived ; to him all would instinctively turn to make known the truth in all difficulties of doctrine and practice ; he would take the leading part at meetings, whether for worship and prayer, or for other purposes ; he would direct everything, and be in the fullest sense the ruler of that church. In a word, he would be the source and centre of all authority and spiritual power, the chief and immediate pastor of the flock. Even though “absent in body,” St. Paul stood in a position much like this to the Corinthian Church. And what is all this but a description of the episcopal office in the exercise of its twofold powers of order and jurisdiction, in the only sense conceivable in those primitive times.†

Putting aside, as of course we are bound to do in the present case, the concurrent testimony and belief of the Church from the third century, and restricting ourselves to the narrow and technical ground which the discussion raised here imposes upon us, the question practically resolves itself into this : Did St. Peter take up his residence in Rome for a period of time sufficient for the assumption and exercise of the apostolic and episcopal position and powers ?

According to Bishop Lightfoot, St. Paul arrived in Rome in the spring of 61. After two years’ imprisonment he was released, and Bishop Lightfoot gives what seem very strong reasons for supposing he then left Rome.‡ After an interval he returned and was martyred, probably in 67. During St. Paul’s absence, Bishop Lightfoot would place St. Peter’s visit to Rome, thus accounting for the fact that no mention of him is made by the writer of the Acts, or by St. Paul in the various epistles written during his imprisonment. St. Peter’s stay in Rome he would limit to a few months, supposing that he

* “Ep. ad Cor.,” § 42 ; *cf.* also St. Paul’s Pastoral Epistles.

† The root of Bishop Lightfoot’s difficulties lies in the fact that he is unable to conceive of a “bishop” in any other sense than the one which is exhausted by the statement that regiment by bishops is historically an apostolic institution, and (if people will proceed further) so far “divine.” That is to say, episcopacy is recommended merely historically but not doctrinally.

‡ “Clem. Rom.,” ii. 30 (note).

arrived there in the second half of 63 and was martyred in the following year.* Thus, on our author's theory, the two apostles were not in Rome at the same time. He thinks that St. Peter had never visited Rome before this occasion. Other writers, of course, think that the phenomena of the case postulate an earlier visit, and that St. Peter was the founder of the Roman Church. Into this question we shall not enter, for whether St. Peter dwelt in Rome twenty-five years, or only one, is a matter of complete indifference to the point under investigation.†

St. Peter in Rome would ordain ministers like any other Apostle, as occasion arose. He would be ruler of the church there. Of this St. Ignatius gives testimony, saying to the Romans, "I will not command you, like Peter and Paul."‡ Even curtailing his stay in Rome to the narrowest possible limits, and making it to have been only a few months, that would allow ample time for him to have exercised the episcopal office; the fact of his staying till his death favours the idea that he had taken up his permanent residence there; lastly, there was no other apostle in Rome at the time. From all that has been said, we think it appears that the nature of the case points strongly to the conclusion that St. Peter was Bishop of Rome in a very true sense, a conclusion in accord with the early tradition of the Roman Church itself.

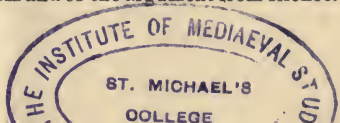
For, if Bishop Lightfoot's surmise, which he seems to support by good reasons, and which is accepted by Dr. Salmon,§ is true, viz., that the list of Roman bishops given by St. Epiphanius is none other than the one drawn up at Rome by

* "Clem. Rom.," ii. 497.

† But one curious fact we must point out. Bishop Lightfoot says: "The Epistle to the Romans was written about A.D. 58. During this period no Apostle had visited the metropolis of the world. If silence can ever be regarded as decisive, its verdict must be accepted in this case. S. Paul could not have written as he writes to the Romans (i. 11 *seq.*, xv. 20-24), if they had received even a short visit from an Apostle, more especially if that Apostle were S. Peter" ("Clem. Rom.," ii. 491). Thus Bishop Lightfoot; on the other hand, Baur thought this same passage (Rom. xv. 20-24) contained such unanswerable evidence of St. Peter's *having* being in Rome, that while accepting the Epistle to the Romans as genuine, he characteristically declared the fifteenth chapter to be spurious (Hagemann, "Die Römische Kirche in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten," 659). This contrast we venture to think is an instructive lesson on the dangers of subjective criticism and of the argument from silence.

‡ "Epistle to the Romans," § 4.

§ "Infallibility of the Church," 359.



Hegesippus, then we have a writer in the middle of the second century thus recording the tradition of the Roman Church itself as to the succession of its bishops: "Peter and Paul, Linus and Cletus, Clement," and so forth.*

It will have been noticed that the passages from Ignatius and Irenæus, and still more formally the one just quoted, tell equally strongly in favour of the idea that St. Paul also had been bishop of Rome. Bishop Lightfoot once looked with some favour on the hypothesis that in the beginning two Christian communities, a Jewish and a Gentile, each with its own bishop, co-existed in Rome, and that they were united under St. Clement; but in his later years he rejected this idea.† According to his account, the two apostles were never in Rome at the same time; and so there need be no difficulty about "a divided episcopate." The peculiar circumstances of St. Paul's life and vocation suggest reasons why, as Bishop Lightfoot points out, he is not reckoned as first bishop of churches like Corinth and Philippi, which owed their first evangelisation to him. His life was that of a wandering missionary, travelling ceaselessly from city to city, founding churches wherever he went, and then passing on and leaving it to others to develop and govern the communities he established. "I planted; Apollos watered." Even as regards Rome, though his stay was prolonged, it was the involuntary detention of a prisoner on parole, and he ever looked forward

* "Clem. Rom.," i. 327-333. Mr. Puller, in his "Primitive Saints and the See of Rome," says: "The real inventor of the story of St. Peter's Roman episcopate appears to have been the unknown heretic who wrote the romance" [*i.e.*, the Clementine Recognitions]; adding in a note, "apparently Bishop Lightfoot agrees" in this view (p. 49). In the passages referred to by Mr. Puller, Bishop Lightfoot says nothing of the kind, nor anything at all like it. Indeed, it may be said without offence that Mr. Puller's treatment of the Recognitions is proper to pass muster with those only (and they are doubtless the majority) who know nothing of the subject. In contrast with Mr. Puller's convenient polemical certainties, it may be well to listen to the words of a master on such matters. "In regard to this document almost everything is still shrouded in obscurity. The one point on which some years ago there seemed agreement—*viz.*, as to its originating c. 150-170—is not only open to the gravest objections, but can be shown to be erroneous. In their present form the Recognitions and Homilies belong, not to the second century, but to the first half of the third; nor is there anything which hinders our placing them some twenty years later." So Harnack ("Dogmengeschichte," i. 266), who cites as agreeing in this view Zahn, Lagarde, Lipsius, and Weingarten. Under these circumstances a revision of so much of Mr. Puller's book as is concerned with the Clementine documents would seem desirable.

† *Ibid.*, i. 68.

to leaving Rome as soon as he could (Philip. i. 25, ii. 24 ; Philemon, 22). Left to himself, and not under the control of circumstances, doubtless in themselves providential, his residence in Rome would have been but a passing call (Rom. xv. 24, 28). With the comparative freedom of "his own hired dwelling," he would naturally exercise apostolic powers, especially if no other apostle were there at the time ; but on his enlargement he probably left Rome. Thus, it is easy to see, on the one hand, how St. Paul came to be counted among her bishops by the tradition of the Roman Church in the middle of the second century, as recorded by Hegesippus and Irenæus ; and on the other hand, how he fell out of the list not long after, as appears from the catalogue of Hippolytus, c. 230.* These circumstances really present no difficulty whatever : they do not affect the question whether St. Peter was Bishop of Rome. So far as that point is concerned, the question whether or no St. Paul also was one of her bishops, is a matter of complete indifference ; if he was, that is but an additional glory.

The fact of the matter is that a vast deal of more or less learned dust has been raised on the point ; all that is wanted is a little straight looking at the facts, so far as they are known, and the likelihoods of the case, and then a plain common-sense judgment. Such a process will, we believe, lead most men to the conclusion that St. Peter was Bishop of Rome in an adequate sense. Let Dr. Lipsius speak, a sturdy rationalist, who has made a special study of the early Roman Church and her bishops :

If ever the Prince of the Apostles set foot in the eternal city, he certainly did not go as a simple traveller, but in virtue of his apostolic power ; and his martyrdom, in that case, forms but the glorious ending of his official labour among the Romans. And if, as many Protestants also hold, the episcopate is of divine institution, then the claim of the Roman Church to trace her episcopal succession back to Peter is, after all, not so very absurd.†

Having now examined into St. Peter's primacy and his Roman episcopate, we next proceed to consider Bishop Lightfoot's third position, which we thus formulated :

* "Clem. Rom.," i. 258-262.

† Cited in Schanz, "Apology," iii. 476 (trans.).

III. The primacy of the Roman Church was not originally due to any primacy of her bishops, but to other causes; and the later primacy of the Bishop of Rome grew out of the early primacy of his Church.

The following extracts, in which the author deals with the letters of St. Clement and St. Ignatius, contain his argument on this head. St. Ignatius' letter to the Romans

is addressed to the Church of Rome. It assigns to this Church a pre-eminence of rank as well as of love (inscr.). . . . With all this importance attributed to the Romish Church, it is the more remarkable that not a word is said about the Roman bishop. Indeed there is not even the faintest hint that a bishop of Rome existed at this time. To ourselves the Church of Rome has been so entirely merged in the Bishop of Rome, that this silence is the more surprising. Yet startling as this omission is, it entirely accords with the information derived from other trustworthy sources. All the ancient notices point to the mature development of episcopacy in Asia Minor at this time. On the other hand, all the earliest notices of the Church in Rome point in the opposite direction. In the Epistle of Clement, which was written a few years before these Ignatian letters purport to be penned, there is no mention of the bishop. The letter is written in the name of the Church; it speaks with the authority of the Church. It is strenuous, even peremptory, in the authoritative tone which it assumes; but it pleads the authority not of the chief minister, but of the whole body. The next document emanating from the Roman Church after the assumed date of the Ignatian Epistles, is the Shepherd of Hermas. Here again we are met with similar phenomena. If we had no other information, we should be at a loss to say what was the form of Church government at Rome when the Shepherd was written. . . . The episcopate, though doubtless it existed in some form or other in Rome, had not yet (it would seem) assumed the same sharp and well-defined monarchical character with which we are confronted in the Eastern Churches.*

Of St. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians he says:

The language of this letter, though itself inconsistent with the possession of papal authority in the person of the writer, enables us to understand the secret of the growth of papal domination. It does not proceed from the Bishop of Rome, but from the Church of Rome. There is every reason to believe the early tradition which points to S. Clement as its author, and yet he is not once named. The first person plural is maintained throughout, "We consider," "We have sent." Accordingly, writers of the second century speak of it as a letter from the community, not from the individual. [Dionysius of Corinth, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria.] . . . The name and personality of Clement are absorbed

* "Ign. and Polyc.," i. 398, 399.

in the Church of which he is the spokesman. [Here follows the passage quoted in the previous article, contrasting Pope Victor at the end of the second century with St. Clement at the end of the first.] Even this second stage has carried the power of Rome only a very small step in advance towards the assumptions of a Hildebrand or an Innocent or a Boniface, or even of a Leo: but it is nevertheless a decided step. The substitution of the bishop of Rome for the Church of Rome is an all-important point. The later Roman theory supposes that the Church of Rome derives all its authority from the bishop of Rome, as the successor of S. Peter.* History inverts this relation and shows that, as a matter of fact, the power of the bishop of Rome was built upon the power of the Church of Rome. It was originally a primacy, not of the episcopate, but of the church. . . . [In St. Ignatius' Letter to the Church of Rome] though Clement's letter is apparently in his mind, there is no mention of Clement or Clement's successor throughout. Yet at the same time he assigns a primacy to Rome. The church is addressed in the opening salutation as "she who hath the presidency (*προκάθηται*) in the place of the region of the Romans." But immediately afterwards the nature of this supremacy is defined. The presidency of this Church is declared to be a presidency of love (*προκαθήμενῆ τῆς ἀγάπης*). This then was the original primacy of Rome—a primacy not of the bishop, but of the whole church, a primacy not of official authority but of practical goodness, backed however by the prestige and the advantages which were necessarily enjoyed by the church of the metropolis. . . . And so it remains till the close of the second century. When, some seventy years later than the date of our epistle, a second letter is written from Rome to Corinth during the episcopate of Soter (about A.D. 165–175), it is still written in the name of the Church, not the bishop, of Rome, and as such is acknowledged by Dionysius of Corinth. "We have read your letter" (*ἑμῶν τὴν ἐπιστολὴν*), he writes in reply to the Romans. At the same time he bears a noble testimony to that moral ascendancy of the early Roman Church which was the historical foundation of its primacy: "This hath been your practice from the beginning: to do good to all the brethren in various ways, and to send supplies (*ἐφόδια*) to many churches in divers cities, in one place recruiting the poverty of those that are in want, in another assisting brethren that are in the mines by the supplies that ye have been in the habit of sending to them from the first, thus keeping up, as becometh Romans, a hereditary practice of Romans, which your blessed bishop Soter hath not only maintained, but also advanced," with more to the same effect.†

The evidence recited in these extracts, based on the writings of St. Clement, St. Ignatius and Hermas, has been enough to persuade many writers of name—among them Harnack—that

* To avoid ambiguities in view of the further treatment of the question I add "Yes; so far as *jus* is concerned."

† "Clem. Rom.," i. 69–72.

a presbyterian form of government without any monarchical bishop existed in the Roman Church until towards the middle of the second century. This view, however, need not delay us here, for Bishop Lightfoot declares definitely against it.* Our author's matured view is that, though there was a monarchical bishop of Rome from the beginning, still "there are grounds for surmising that the bishops of Rome were not at the time raised so far above their presbyters as in the Churches of the East"; that "the episcopate, though doubtless it existed in some form or other in Rome, had not yet (it would seem) assumed the same sharp and well-defined monarchical character with which we are confronted in the Eastern Churches."†

We would be quite ready to discuss the evidence with those who maintain that there were no bishops of Rome until the middle of the second century; but really, when it becomes a mere question of the degree of monarchical character of the Roman bishops as compared with others, it seems to us that the distinction, where after all so little evidence is forthcoming, is somewhat fine-drawn; and we are therefore disposed to say *transeat*—to allow Bishop Lightfoot's contention for sake of argument. We shall therefore assume that, though the early Roman Church was the most important in Christendom, still the position of the Roman bishop, as distinct from the body of his Church, is not until the middle of the second century so prominent or clearly defined as in other Churches. Let us see how the case looks from this standpoint. It must be recollected, to adopt the words of Cardinal Newman, written in 1871, that

* "It would be an excess of scepticism, with the evidence before us, to question the existence of the episcopate as a distinct office from the presbyterate in the Roman Church" [at the date of St. Ignatius' Epistles] ("Ign. and Polyc.," i. 395). Again, "Though, so far as I can see, no adequate reason can be advanced why Linus and Anencletus [the two names between St. Peter and St. Clement] should not have been bishops in the later sense, as single rulers of the Church, yet here the tradition, if unsupported by any other considerations, cannot inspire any great confidence. But with Clement the case is different. The testimony of the succeeding ages is strong and united" ("Clem. Rom.," i. 68). Lastly, "As regards the names [Linus and Anencletus] I see no reason to question that they not only represent historical persons, but that they were bishops in the sense of monarchical rulers of the Roman Church, though their monarchy may have been much less autocratic than the episcopate even of the succeeding century" ("Clem. Rom.," i. 340).

† "Ign. and Polyc.," i. 395, 399.

Ignatius witnessed and took part in the establishment of diocesan episcopacy. . . . Hitherto bishops had lived together in community, the apostles exercising a jurisdiction over the whole Church. As time went on, local jurisdiction came into use. In his last years St. Paul placed local ordinaries in Crete and Ephesus and St. John in other cities of Asia Minor, if the seven angels of the churches in the Apocalypse are bishops ;* [similarly, as has been seen, SS. Peter and Paul in Rome].

Of course bishops would not be at once appointed in every town where there was a Christian community. The gradual growth of ecclesiastical organisation in a missionary country nowadays will give some idea of what must have taken place. Some churches must have remained longer than others under the management of a presbyter or board of presbyters, and then, as Cardinal Newman goes on to say, when a bishop was appointed, the vindication of his position "was not so much the enforcement of a tradition, as the carrying out of a development." Hence it is natural to suppose that in this process of disengagement the bishop's position would not be everywhere at once fully understood ; it would take some time for his authority and powers to be explicitly recognised and legally formulated ; and no doubt the process would go on more rapidly in one church or locality than in another, and the full monarchical character of the episcopate would be established sooner here than there. From the mere shreds of evidence that have come down to us, Bishop Lightfoot draws the following conclusions : (1) By the middle of the second century, monarchical episcopacy was well established not only in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, but also in Greece, Thrace, Gaul, Africa, and Alexandria, as well as Rome. (2) The development was not simultaneous and equal in all parts of Christendom. (3) It was slower in the West than in the East. (4) It appears in its mature form first in Syria and Asia Minor.† Of course all this is looking at the question from a purely historical standpoint, which is the one we desire to take up. Sharply defined monarchical episcopacy did not, so far as reliance can be placed on extant documents, first

* "Essays, Critical and Historical," i. 251. Bishop Lightfoot does not so understand the Angels of the Churches ; but for all that in many places he connects the establishment of episcopacy in Asia Minor with St. John ("The Christian Ministry").

† See the "Essay on the Christian Ministry" ("Dissertations," pp. 166-191); also "Ign. and Polyc.," i. 389-399.

manifest itself at Rome. Had it done so (it may be remarked by the way) there might be some plausibility in attributing the growth of the power and influence of the Roman bishops to personal ambition and other such causes. But historically Rome only kept pace with, perhaps even followed, what was going on all around. "The substitution of the bishop of Rome for the Church of Rome" was no anomaly; it was part of a movement in progress all over Christendom at any rate in the early second century. Everywhere the tendency was to concentrate more and more the whole authority and power of each church in the hands of the bishop, who became the representative of his church, and the monarchical ruler, absorbing in his own person whatever authority and rights had hitherto been enjoyed by the presbyterate or the community, the bishop in each case naturally inheriting the ecclesiastical position that had belonged to his church. And so there was no more aggrandisement or ambition or impropriety in the Bishop of Rome taking that place among bishops which his church had held among churches, than in a bishop of Magnesia or Tralles becoming the monarchical ruler of his own church.

We are thus brought back to the consideration of the position of the Roman Church during the first two centuries. The subject to be investigated is the nature of its primacy, which now is not questioned by any competent scholar, and the origin and reasons of it. Our author, as the foregoing extracts show, has his theories on these points. But before we come to examine them it will be well to have a clear idea of the problem that demands solution. The following chronological conspectus gives in Bishop Lightfoot's own words his conception of the position of the Roman Church and bishop during the second century.

C. A.D. 95.—St. Clement's office as Bishop of Rome was "on any showing" "exceptionally prominent" ("Clem. Rom.," i. 58, note); his position was that of "the chief ruler of the most important church in Christendom" (*Ibid.* i. 61); his Epistle to the Corinthians, not to any suburbicarian church, is "urgent and almost imperious" (*Ibid.* i. 69); "it speaks with the authority of the Church," and "is strenuous, even peremptory, in the authoritative tone it assumes" ("Ign. and Polyc.," i. 398). And so this, the first document emanating

from the Roman Church, is also "the first step towards papal domination" ("Clem. Rom.," i. 70).

C. A. D. 110.—St. Ignatius "assigns a primacy to Rome" (*Ibid.*, i. 71); he "assigns to this Church a pre-eminence of rank as well as of love" ("Ign. and Polyc.," i. 398).

C. A. D. 150.—Hegesippus and Irenæus resided for some considerable time at Rome soon after the middle of the second century ("Clem. Rom.," i. 202–3). "The succession of the bishops of Rome is with them the chief guarantee of the transmission of the orthodox doctrine" ("Ign. and Polyc.," i. 399).

C. A. D. 170.—In the Epitaph of Abercius, a Phrygian bishop, "we shall naturally interpret the queen as denoting the Roman Church" ("Ign. and Polyc.," i. 498–9).

C. A. D. 180.—St. Irenæus by his *potentior principalitas* assigns to the Roman Church "a certain precedence . . . over the other churches of Christendom" (*Ibid.*, ii. 191, note).

C. A. D. 190.—"The close of the second century witnessed the autocratic pretensions of the haughty Pope Victor," "the first also who advanced those claims to universal dominion which his successors in later ages have always consistently and often successfully maintained" ("Dissertations," 186).

And so by the end of the second century "the substitution of the Bishop of Rome for the Church of Rome" is an accomplished fact ("Clem. Rom.," i. 70).*

Here are the phenomena to be accounted for as they appear to Bishop Lightfoot. And how does he account for them? The original primacy of Rome, he contends, was "a primacy not of official authority, but of practical goodness, backed however by the prestige and the advantages which were necessarily enjoyed by the church of the metropolis."† A perusal of the whole passage, which has been cited above (p. 31), will show that this theory is founded upon one single fact, viz., the expression of St. Ignatius in addressing the Roman Church as *προκαθήμενη τῆς ἀγάπης*, which is

* We may observe that the facts of the case are set forth still more fully and strongly by Harnack in his remarkable excursus "Katholisch und Römisch" ("Dogmengeschichte," i. 400–412). Like Bishop Lightfoot, he holds that the primacy originally belonged to the Roman Church, not the Roman bishop—a position necessarily following from his view of the origin and nature of episcopacy.

† "Clem. Rom.," i. 71.

taken as meaning that this church has "the presidency of love," *i.e.*, that she takes the lead in "practical goodness," in works of charity to other churches, and so forth. The letter of Dionysius of Corinth, half a century later, is quoted in illustration, but, as has been said, the theory rests on the passage of St. Ignatius alone. Two questions at once arise: is this the true interpretation of the language? and, if so, does it account for the phenomena to be explained?

Among recent critics, Zahn agrees with Bishop Lightfoot,* but Döllinger, Hefele, Funk, Schanz, and especially Hagemann, who discusses the point learnedly, and more in detail than the others, all contend that the proposed interpretation is inadmissible, and that ἡ ἀγάπη here means the "Brotherhood," the whole Church.† Harnack does not decide between the two interpretations, apparently thinking that either may be the real meaning of the words.‡ Thus Bishop Lightfoot's theory of the main cause of the Roman primacy is founded at best on a doubtful rendering of a single passage.

To leave the question of language, and come to that of fact, does the theory commend itself as intrinsically satisfactory? Is it likely that works of charity and "practical goodness," "sending supplies to many churches," and "recruiting the poverty of those in want," and "assisting brethren that are in the mines," could have been carried out on such a scale by the Roman Church in the first century, as to have made her, by the year 100, "the most important Church in Christendom," and to have won for her a recognised "precedence of rank," and to have warranted her in interfering in the affairs of another apostolic church of first rank with a tone of authority? Do we not feel at once that there is no proportion between the alleged cause and the effects to be accounted for?

But this is a good example of the hypotheses put forward

* "Patrum Apost. Op.," ed. Gebhardt—Harnack—Zahn, Fasc. ii. 57.

† Döllinger, "Hist. of the Church," i. 255 (trans.); Hefele, "Patr. Apost. Op." (ed. Migne, 1857), *in loc.*; Funk, "Op. Patr. Apost." (ed. 1881), *in loc.*; Schanz, "Apology," iii. 481 (trans.); Hagemann, "Die Römische Kirche," 687. It may be objected that all these writers are Catholic; in the same way it may be replied that Bishop Lightfoot is an Anglican. And we venture to think that their names and their reputations, no less than his, are a guarantee that none of them would allow himself for any polemical purposes to distort a piece of evidence.

‡ "Der Vorsitz in der Liebe, sei es nun in dem Liebesbunde oder bei den Liebeswerken" ("Dogmengeschichte," i. 404, note).

by highly competent writers to explain on exclusively natural grounds the rise and growth of the Roman primacy. Of all the explanations attempted, we cannot help thinking that Bishop Lightfoot's is among the most superficial; and those which go deeper only land us in greater difficulties. To take two representative writers, one German, the other English: The Roman Church was the first to have a fixed baptismal creed, and to promulgate it as the apostolic rule by which all must be measured, hence the Roman Church was recognised as being able, with special precision, to discriminate between the true and the false. She first had a fixed canon of the New Testament. The idea of the apostolic succession of bishops was first brought into prominence in connection with the Roman Church. The Eastern Churches received from a Roman bishop, "and probably rightly," the code of apostolic constitutions for ecclesiastical organisation.* The Roman Church was trusted for its traditional immunity from heretical speculations. It was a typical Church, a sample Church, a miniature of the whole body, and by referring to it, one could see what was held by all.†

But these are no explanations of the phenomena under investigation. They only force the question a step further back. We instinctively ask, How is it that this congeries of very remarkable facts is to be found in this one church, and in no other? Can any reason be assigned why this Roman Church should have been thus highly privileged? The facts set forth are not the causes of her primacy, but its results. They are its manifestation in actual practice; and to put them forward as its causes is surely to argue in a vicious circle. They remind us of Gibbon's famous "secondary causes" of the rapid spread of Christianity, which are true enough, and no doubt did materially help to bring about the great result; but the very existence of which, and much more their combination, are part of the phenomena that demand explanation.

There is, however, one way of accounting for the primacy which deserves special attention, both because it would be really a cause and not a result; and also because it is regarded by

* Harnack, "Dogmengeschichte," i. 401-3.

† Bright, "Roman Claims tested by Antiquity."

Bishop Lightfoot, and, indeed, universally by non-Catholic writers, as a potent factor, if not the chief factor, in the evolution of the Papacy; and that is the theory that the ecclesiastical primacy of Rome among churches was but the corollary of her civil primacy among cities—that the church of the capital of the Roman Empire became as a matter of course the primatial church of Christendom. This naturally is the view of constitutional historians, of whom Professor Bryce, in his “Holy Roman Empire,” may be taken as an example. It is evident that the imperial position of Rome with all its associations and prestige would make it, naturally speaking, much easier for the church of Rome than for any other church to become the head of the Christian commonwealth, and to exercise a primacy. All this is true, and we would even wish to urge its force; for the presence of a supernatural and primary cause cannot be held to exclude the operation of others, natural and secondary—indeed it is the ordinary course of Providence to make use of such causes as helps in working out its designs. But the point at issue is precisely this: Are the civil position of Rome, and the bountiful generosity of the Roman Church, and so on, sufficient *of themselves* to account for the primacy of that church in the form in which it already presents itself in the course of the second century? For we must emphasize the fact that it is a question, not of the fourth century, but of the second. The result of the labours of the modern school of ecclesiastical historians has been to throw back this question, and others, two centuries, whereby the case assumes a complexion and urgency of which the older generation of scholars had no conception. Had the primacy emerged into the light of day and taken shape for the first time when Christianity had become the State religion, no doubt a good case might be made out; but seeing that by the end of the second century it is clearly to be discerned in all its main outlines, there simply is not time for the process of evolution postulated on such theories. Let it be considered also that the Roman Church of the first two centuries was composed for the most part of Greeks and Orientals, of slaves and freedmen, with occasionally a few persons moving in the higher, or even highest, circles of society;* is it reasonable to suppose that this

* Cf. “Clem. Rom.,” i. 33, 61-2; “Ign. and Polyc.,” i. 536, 370.

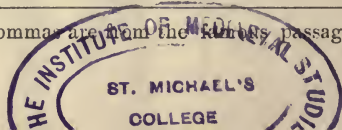
insignificant, suspected and contemned section of the population could by the mere prestige of the city have been invested with an authority analogous to that of the capital and seat of government of the world? As soon as we set ourselves to realise what is postulated on this theory, and test it by a supposed parallel case in our own day, we feel the difficulties involved. And even supposing the political prestige of the city could thus insensibly communicate itself from the pagan state to the Christian church in matter of pre-eminence and government, it is still harder to see how any such considerations could have given rise to the peculiar doctrinal authority recognised by Harnack and Lightfoot as having belonged to the Roman Church already in the second century.

Passing from the abstract question whether or not the Roman primacy might have arisen in this way, to the question of fact did it so arise, we are confronted with the fact that not a trace of this notion is to be found among the writers of the time; on the contrary, they held quite distinctly a very different theory. In their eyes the greatest weight in the settlement of questions of faith was attached to the traditions and teaching of the apostolic churches; to this principle Irenæus and Tertullian have recourse again and again in their controversies with the heretics. And the reason for this appeal is by no means the civil importance of the cities in which such churches exist, but simply and solely the fact that they had been founded by apostles. Now among all apostolic churches both these writers single out the Church of Rome as being in a special way apostolic, in a special way a witness to the orthodox faith. And they both assign the same reason for this pre-eminence of the Roman Church among apostolic churches—viz., that it was founded and presided over by the two greatest apostles, SS. Peter and Paul. Writers like Irenæus and Tertullian must be accepted as at any rate representing the ideas, the tone of thought, the feeling of their own times, and all the more so from the fact that they use this as their chief and most convincing argument in controversy with heretics. And that tone of thought, of feeling, is the outcome of ideas and reasons of a character essentially religious, providential (and here lies too the root of our own difference with Protestant writers like Bishop Lightfoot), and not

ideas and reasons merely secular, civil, accidental. Moreover, we venture to think that the living belief of the early Church, thus evidenced by these well-informed writers, is in a matter of this kind more likely to be true than the speculations of even the most keen-sighted critics of the nineteenth century, worked up as they are in the solitude of the study out of scanty records, eked out by the intuitions and, it may be, the prejudices of their originators. The primitive theory recommends itself by its simplicity; nay, it admits even of mathematical statement: As "the two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul" are to the other apostles, so is "that greatest, most ancient and illustrious church," "founded and constituted" by them at Rome, to other apostolic churches.* The reason assigned by Irenæus and Tertullian for the peculiar pre-eminence of the Roman Church is the same, but existing in a supereminent degree, as the reason they assign for the pre-eminence enjoyed by all apostolic churches. Whatever ingenuity may be employed in the attempt to give plausibility to the modern theory, there can be no question of the fact that, so far as extant evidence can be relied on, it was quite unknown in primitive times, and must be pronounced unhistorical.

To proceed a step further. The second-century conception of the primacy of the Roman Church attributed it to the fact that that church had been founded and taught and presided over by the two apostles, SS. Peter and Paul. But the same might be said of Antioch and (probably) of Corinth. There must, therefore, have been some unique element in their connection with Rome. It will hardly be maintained that their martyrdom at Rome is the determining factor of which we are in search. Lastly, is it Peter or is it Paul who in the ultimate analysis will prove to be the solution of the problem? We cannot help thinking that an unmistakable answer is given to this question by, so to say, the instinctive working of the inner consciousness of the Roman Church herself, in allowing the Doctor of the Gentiles to fall out of the list of her bishops in the early years of the third century, while the Prince of the Apostles ever grew more and more into prominence. Nor can

* The expressions in inverted commas are from the famous passage of St. Irenæus ("Adv. Haer.," iii. 3).



this process be attributed to Ebionism, a tendency of which, according to Bishop Lightfoot,* no traces are to be found at Rome. On the other hand, is there any historical fact which differentiates St. Peter from St. Paul, and marks out the former as a source of authority in a way which cannot be predicated of the latter? And thus at length we are led up to the Catholic explanation of the primacy of Rome, the historical side of which may be briefly formulated as follows :

(A) A pre-eminence, a primacy, was conferred on St. Peter by our Lord. We have endeavoured throughout these investigations to confine ourselves to the domain of history, without entering on any doctrinal considerations, and so no attempt has been made to determine the nature of this primacy. We are quite satisfied to accept Bishop Lightfoot's version of what the Petrine texts gave to St. Peter. Not only is it the case that "he holds the first place in all the lists," but "above all he receives special pastoral charges."† It would be difficult to express more tersely or to bring out more fully in so few words the significance of our Lord's three great utterances to St. Peter. This is precisely what is meant by a primacy, not merely of honour or leadership, but also of jurisdiction. Once it is granted that St. Peter ever held such a primacy, it must be assumed that he retained it, until positive proof to the contrary is forthcoming. And in the previous article the insufficiency of the reasons brought forward to show that it was temporary was dwelt upon at some length.

(B) St. Peter, towards the end of his life, if not before, made his way to that very city which all the circumstances of the time, as well as the genius of its people for rule and administration, united in pointing out as the natural seat of a primacy over Christendom; he took up his residence there, constituted, and presided over the Christian community; and, except on the hypothesis that the apostles were not bishops, he must be regarded as, in an adequate sense, Bishop of Rome.

(C) On its first appearance on the stage of history, only thirty years after St. Peter's martyrdom, the Roman Church is already the most prominent church of Christendom; its

* "Dissertations," 93-103.

† "Clem. Rom.," ii. 481.

primacy is recognised throughout the course of the second century by writers in different countries; its succession of bishops is looked to as the chief guarantee of the transmission of the orthodox doctrine; the first articulate voice that issues from the mouth of one of its bishops is the first step to Papal domination; the second, a century later, is a claim to universal dominion. “*Vera incessu patuit dea!*”

Thus we have three unmistakable historical facts:

St. Peter's primacy.

His connection with the Roman Church as bishop.

The primacy of that church from the dawn of Christian history.

The question comes to this: Are we to look upon these as three isolated facts, and to beat about for independent sets of causes to account for them; or are we to conceive of them as organically connected, so that the third is the natural outcome of the other two? We cannot help thinking that the latter alternative is at once the simpler, the more logical, and the one more in accord with ascertained facts, and with primitive beliefs.

ot and the
e # 7815

THE INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES
10 ELMSLEY PLACE
TORONTO 5, CANADA,

7815.

